DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 187 709 SP 016 208

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TITLE Teacher Interns: A Senior Level Diagnostic-Prescriptive Training Model.
PUB DATE 80
NOTE 12p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Field Experience Programs; Graduate Students; *Individual Instruction; *Internship Programs; Occupational Aspiration; *Practicum Supervision; Preservice Teacher Education; Self Actualization; *Student Role; Student Teacher Relationship; *Teacher Interns; *Team Teaching

ABSTRACT

A team teaching model for teacher interns is described. The teaching team is comprised of education professors and graduate student assistants who work closely with individual interns. Three components undergird the model: 1) the teaching team's acceptance of goals expressed by the interns; 2) the team's agreement with the plans and approaches utilized by the interns to achieve their stated goals; and 3) the implementation of learning experiences uniquely suited to the interns' individual dispositions. (JD)

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Teacher Interns: A Senior Level Diagnostic-Prescriptive Training Model

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Teacher Interns: A Senior Level
A Diagnostic-Prescriptive Training Model

Present-day societal pressures for quality education in America are increasingly being brought to the attention of higher institutions of learning. In response to this concern, professional educators are heavily scrutinizing the educational and general curricula of American universities. Major curriculum revisions are emerging as a result of this scrutiny. Improvement in teacher-training, ethnic studies, interdisciplinary sciences, and the humanities is clearly being demonstrated. Despite this improvement, however, serious questions about quality education continue to plague curriculum makers, especially in the area of teacher-training. Virtually no attention is currently being given diagnostic teaching and heuristic learning based on expressed needs of teacher interns, their individual learning styles, and their personal involvement with faculty in the process of their learning to teach.

How, then, do teachers-in-training learn? What should they learn? To what extent can senior-level college students, in particular, assume responsibility for their own learning? To what extent do they have the right to do so? What is important for each student? Who is to decide? In the spring of 1978, a team of three instructors and two graduate students in New Mexico State University's Department of Curriculum and Instruction was formulated to search out answers to these and related questions.

The Model

Marked by the potential of a first encounter with optimum individual experiences for instructors and students, a senior-level model for teacher-training is presently underway at New Mexico State University. The model encompasses a team-teaching approach which has been implemented on the basis of expressed needs and interests of teacher interns. Three components undergird the model: (1) the teaching team's acceptance of goals expressed by the interns; (2) the team's agreement with the plans and approaches utilized by the interns to achieve their stated goals; and (3) the implementation of learning experiences uniquely suited to the interns' individual dispositions.

To expedite these components, heavy emphasis is being placed on the interns' expression of what and how they wish to learn in preparation for teaching careers. Four conceptual thrusts serve to integrate this emphasis:

1. The teacher and students as persons.
2. The teacher and students as interpersonal.
3. The teacher and students as learners.
4. The teacher and students as teachers.

Each of these focal points are designed to generate greater relevancy to the educational experiences of both the instructional team and the teacher interns, and at developing more responsive attitudes toward teaching and learning.

1. The Teacher and Students as Persons. What does it mean to be a person? Who am I? What am I? What are my motivations for choosing

a teaching career? In the view of the teaching team, all learning experiences comprising the senior-level model commence with the faculty's and teacher intern's personal value systems. Consequently, both faculty and interns participate in activities which develop individual ideas on what it is to be a person. The exploration and expression of personal attitudes, feelings, motivations, and interests constitute the nub of their experiences.

Observation, role-playing, and meditation are utilized by the teaching team to encourage individual expression. Modeling is a central ingredient of this expression and it is utilized as a means of encouraging faculty and interns to behave openly and honestly. It is intended that the teacher interns will encourage pupils for whom they are responsible to express their feelings, concerns, and aspirations similarly in public school classrooms.

2. The Teacher and Students as Interpersonal. The interpersonal dimension of the model's conceptual thrusts focus largely on individuality, caring, interdependence, and mutual needs. The intent is to have both the instructional team members and teacher interns communicate with each other to the extent that a constructive learning relationship is maximized. Activities are designed to create open dialogues which invite honest expression so that neither faculty or intern grows at the expense of each other. Rather, through careful listening to differences of opinions, it is expected that each individual member of both groups will grow uniquely different from each other. This is to say, a primary target of this conceptual thrust is to encourage each to accept or

reject, rearrange or reconstruct, and extrapolate according to each's needs as teachers and learners.

3. The Teacher and Students as Learners. In exploration of what it means to be a learner, teacher interns undergo activities which focus on the nature of the learner and the natural attributes of learning. The view is taken that each intern is different, dynamic, and ever-changing; that the intern's learning must encompass questioning, searching out, discovering; that each learns divergently through multiple experiences, relationships, and feelings. Consequently, in exploration of what it means to be a learner, the teaching team has focused largely on classroom experiences which invite heuristic learning.

Motivational theory undergirds this learning. In response to student requests for activities applicable to public school settings which motivate children's natural learning, experiences based on mental stimulation, discovery, modeling, body movement, and success are being implemented in the teaching laboratory. Five components comprise this implementation:

a. imagining, creating, and solving problems

b. exploring, observing, and experimenting

c. cooperating and modeling

d. constructing, manipulating, and playing

e. improving skills and achieving mastery

In modeling these components of motivational theory, a primary target of the teaching team is that the interns emulate selected components in the classrooms to which they are assigned for practical experience

in teaching.

4. The Teacher and Students as Teachers. The last of the teaching team's conceptual thrusts, the teacher and students as teachers, exposes teacher interns to diverse methodologies of teaching. A central purpose of the methodologies implemented is to place the interns in dominant active roles whereby they initiate heuristic, self-directed learning, exercise personal options, assume individual and group responsibility, and develop techniques for problem-solving. This is to say, strong emphasis is placed on inductive and interactive modes of teaching, rather than on expository methods that place learners in subordinate roles.

Included in the inductive and interactive modes of teaching experienced by the teacher interns are those which utilize inquiry, simulation, experimentation, self-pacing, personalized learning, group projects, peer tutoring, team learning, socio-drama, role-playing, and learning centers as approaches to learning.

Operational Dimensions of the Model

The senior level, team-teaching model embodies a teaching laboratory, integrative seminars, and field experiences for which the teacher interns earn 16 credit hours in one semester. Three professors and two graduate assistants comprise the team responsible for each of these components. Each member of the team is a specialist in a given subject area: namely, in science, social studies, language arts, bilingual education, and special education. All are experienced in preschool, primary, intermediate and upper level schooling.

One of the professors serves as the teaching team's chairperson, while another serves as a placement coordinator responsible for student teaching assignments in the public schools. Figure 1 shows in diagrammatic form the composition of the team and designated credit load.

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Figure 1 about here

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1. The Teaching Laboratory. Instruction in the teaching laboratory focuses on the four major conceptual thrusts previously cited, as well as on "core" and "professional" skills, which are identified by students and instructors. A university classroom constitutes the setting of the instructional experiences for the teacher interns and instruction is team-taught. This is to say, what is taught is determined by the teaching team as a result of needs and interests expressed by teacher interns. Care and professional skills are addressed by those instructors having greatest expertise in specific identified areas.

The forms of instruction and the types of evaluation are varied. Teacher interns may be taught in total class settings, in small groups, or in individual conferences. Evaluation procedures vary according to educational and experiential prescription as determined by the instructors and teacher interns.

2. Integrative Seminars. This component of the model serves to link the teaching laboratory and the field experience. Teacher interns are assigned to a seminar for the term and meet one hour weekly. Each

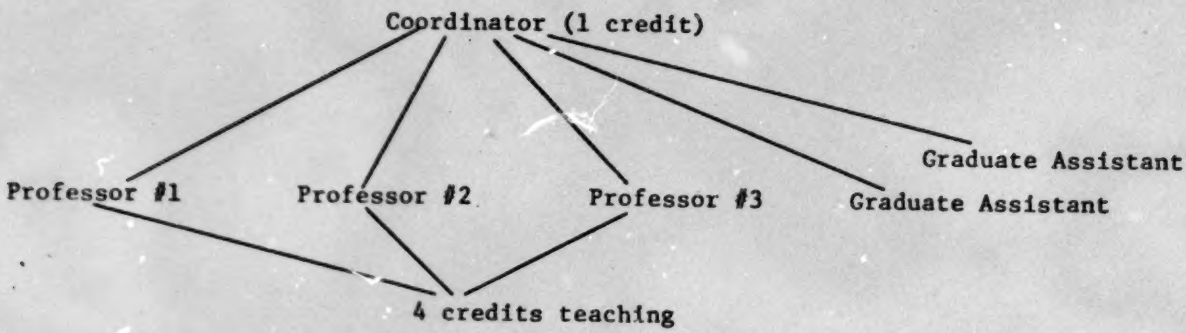

Figure 1: Teaching Team and Credit Load

instructor serves as the teacher interns' field supervisor, as well as providing diagnostic and prescriptive, individualized instruction for the intern in the laboratory experience. Personalizing of conceptual material is emphasized so that theory and practice are strongly forged.

3. Field Experiences. Practical application of what is learned in the laboratory setting undergirds this component of the model. That is to say, theoretical constructs are practiced by the teacher interns in public school classrooms.

An initial two weeks of full-time field experience precede the teaching laboratory. Interns are thus encouraged to first "encounter" the practical aspects of the teaching profession and follow this by searching for individual answers or "meanings." This has, thus far, created a "need-to-learn" by each of the interns before approaching theoretical considerations and results in the modeling of heuristic learning theory and practice for the teacher interns.

Hours per day and per week after the initial two-week experience are flexibly arranged to meet assessed individual intern needs. However, a significant block of time is arranged so that each may gain the benefits of continuity in a classroom setting.

Innovative Aspects of the Model

The authors believe that the model presented herein encompasses the best aspects of:

1. Team teaching - teaching laboratory; core and professional skills; faculty interaction.

2. Departmentalization - teaching laboratory; professional skills; faculty specialization.
3. Self-contained classroom - teaching laboratory; integrative seminar; faculty individualization.

Thus, three major elementary level classroom structure patterns will be modeled for the teacher interns.

Additionally, the model allows enough flexibility and room for innovation to provide possibility for, and subsequent modeling of:.

1. Diagnostic teaching
2. Remediation: individualization and personalized instruction based upon cognitive styles.
3. On-site, public school classroom teaching and seminars allowing for meaningful integration of theory and practical application.

It is to be noted that the best aspects of inquiry-based instruction and "basic" instruction are incorporated in both the core and professional skills of the teaching laboratory, and in the flexible, individualized scheduling of the field experience. Thus, two major modes of curricular emphasis are being modeled for teacher interns.

Finally, the model embodies a doctoral internship for graduate teaching assistants who aspire to teach on a university level. As practiced in the model, they share equal responsibilities with the professional team. They are currently responsible for planning, teaching both core and professional skills, and for supervising field experiences of teacher interns under the indirect supervision of the professional

staff. In addition to providing this unique experiential setting for doctoral students, the teaching team experience provides them with excellent research opportunities under laboratory conditions. They may, for example, engage in evaluative studies of the model presently being implemented for dissertation purposes.

Given the unique aspects and innovations structured into the revised, senior level, elementary student teaching experience at New Mexico State University, it is expected that teacher interns will gain a knowledge base, and will participate in a set of experiences uniquely designed to prepare them to enter the teaching profession as skilled and desirable staff members. It is also hoped that the wide range of experiences, teaching techniques, and classroom organizations modeled in the block will allow them to perform well, and to feel comfortable with the diversities encountered in public school education and the ever-changing dynamic aspects of the teaching profession. Finally, it is assumed that the degree of flexibility built into the revised senior level, teacher-preparation program will allow for modification quickly enough to meet public school, societal, and student needs.